



## The Security Dilemma and the Prevailing Trend of the Arms Race in the Middle East throughout 2020-2022

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### Abstract

This research aims to find the causes of the arms race in the Middle East region from 2020 to 2022. The justification for the problem is that although from 2020 to 2022 there is a tendency for reconciliation of relations between countries in the Middle East, the arms race still continues in the region. In addition, military exercises conducted by the United States, Israel, and Gulf Arab states are getting more intense. This paper uses the conception of security dilemma in explaining the causes of the arms race trend in the Middle East region. The method used by this paper is qualitative by analyzing statements, news, and official documents from related Middle Eastern countries. This paper finds that mistrust between Middle Eastern countries, especially between Iran, Israel, and several Arab countries, causes tense relations between these actors. Each country increased its military power in response to the uncertain situation. Some Arab countries are strengthening their defense systems to counter Iran, which is perceived as a common threat. Iran is perceived by Israel and some Arab countries as an offensive country. Some Arab countries also normalized with Israel and formed strategic alliances with the Zionist state. In contrast, Iran continues to strengthen its military power because it has no trust in Israel and Arab countries. In conclusion, the conception of security dilemma can explain the distrust between actors in the Middle East region. As a result of this distrust, an arms race between countries occurs.

**Keywords: Arms Race; Security Dilemma; Middle East**

### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari penyebab terjadinya perlombaan senjata di kawasan Timur Tengah pada tahun 2020 hingga 2022. Justifikasi masalahnya adalah meskipun dari tahun 2020 hingga 2022 terdapat kecenderungan untuk rekonsiliasi hubungan antara negara-negara di Timur Tengah, perlombaan senjata masih berlanjut di wilayah tersebut. Selain itu, latihan militer yang dilakukan oleh Amerika Serikat, Israel, dan negara-negara Arab Teluk semakin intens. Paper ini menggunakan konsepsi security dilemma dalam menjelaskan penyebab tren perlombaan senjata di kawasan Timur Tengah. Metode yang digunakan paper ini adalah kualitatif dengan menganalisa pernyataan, berita, maupun dokumen resmi dari negara-negara Timur Tengah terkait. Paper ini menemukan bahwa ketidakpercayaan antar negara Timur Tengah, khususnya antara Iran, Israel, dan beberapa negara Arab, menyebabkan ketegangan hubungan antar aktor tersebut. Setiap negara meningkatkan kekuatannya sebagai tanggapan terhadap situasi yang tidak menentu. Beberapa negara Arab memperkuat sistem pertahanan mereka untuk melawan Iran yang dianggap sebagai sebuah ancaman bersama. Iran dipersepsikan oleh Israel dan beberapa negara Arab sebagai negara yang ofensif. Beberapa negara Arab juga melakukan normalisasi dengan Israel dan membentuk aliansi strategis dengan negara Zionis tersebut. Sebaliknya, Iran terus memperkuat kekuatannya karena tidak memiliki kepercayaan terhadap Israel dan negara-negara Arab. Kesimpulannya, konsepsi security dilemma dapat menjelaskan*

*ketidakpercayaan antar aktor di kawasan Timur Tengah. Akibat ketidakpercayaan tersebut, maka perlombaan senjata antar negara terjadi.*

***Kata-Kata Kunci: Perlombaan Senjata; Dilema Keamanan; Timur Tengah***

## **Introduction**

The Middle East may have a period of peace by the year 2020. The potential for reconciliation is seen in the observed trend of conflict resolution in several Middle Eastern Nations. An illustration of this is the Abraham Accord. The peace deal, introduced during Donald Trump's tenure as President of the United States from 2016 to 2020, incentivizes Middle Eastern and North African nations willing to establish diplomatic relations with Israel (Niu & Wu, 2021). Furthermore, a significant historical encounter occurred in 2021 when a delegation from Saudi Arabia and Iran convened under the mediation of the Iraqi government. On the other hand, the government of the United Arab Emirates met President Bashar al-Assad in December 2021. The two countries agreed to normalize diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that a discernible inclination exists toward reconciliation within the Gulf region. Since 2017, Qatar has become entangled in a conflict with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) governments, resulting in a wide-ranging embargo imposed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. However, in 2021, the GCC administration took steps to mend relations with Qatar and formalize a peace agreement. The emergence of multiple meetings and agreements in the Middle East region is perceived as a novel manifestation of optimism. In the current trajectory, conflicting factions have the potential to leverage this prevailing momentum to facilitate reconciliation efforts and establish mechanisms for armaments.

However, despite the prevailing tendency towards peace, it is essential to acknowledge that conflicts in the Middle East continue to emerge. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), confrontations in Israel, Iraq, Turkey, and Yemen are ongoing. The forms of conflict exhibit variation, encompassing inter-state conflicts, intra-state conflicts, and civil wars with international dimensions (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022). The Middle East region is recognized as volatile and precarious within the global geopolitical landscape. Battles and conflicts have been a recurring and inescapable aspect of the Middle East region for several decades (Safavi, 2022). There is a potential for the United States to participate in direct military engagement within the context of the Middle East conflict, particularly when tensions arise between Israel and Iran. The potential for regional confrontation between Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States on one side and Iran on the other has also played a role in the emergence of proxy warfare and political interference in the Middle East.

Another factor that runs counter to the prevailing pattern of peace negotiations in the Middle East is the phenomenon of the weapons race. SIPRI documented a significant increase in the deployment of weaponry throughout the Middle East region. The Middle East receives the majority of weaponry exports from the United States, accounting for 52 percent. Russia follows with a 13 percent share, while France trails behind with a 12 percent share. The percentage of imports in Saudi Arabia amounted to 61 percent. On the other hand, the United Arab Emirates decreased by 37 percent. Nevertheless, the policy proposal to procure F-35 aircraft continues to reflect the prevailing pattern of arms imports within the area. According to the report, Qatar has experienced a significant surge in the acquisition of defense equipment, with a notable increase of 361%. This trend is exemplified by acquiring F-35 fighter planes, a substantial number of sophisticated

munitions, and a fleet of four submarines. The utilization of automatic weapons, including those found in military drones, has been observed in the arms race within the Middle East region. According to SIPRI, it has been determined that the Middle East region continues to experience a notable increase in arms imports (Wezeman, Kuimova, & Wezeman, 2021).

Throughout 2021, several countries in the Middle East have conducted large-scale military exercises. In June, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, and Egypt collaborated to organize and execute the Tuwaiq 2 maneuvers, while in November, the United States conducted joint exercises near the Gulf of Hormuz with Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel. Collaborative activities involving the US Army, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia were also conducted under the Gulf Shooting and Indigo Defender programs. Meanwhile, Iran has scheduled various training exercises involving warships, submarines, and drones to prepare for potential aerial assaults near nuclear installations. It has announced its intention to build hypersonic missiles capable of penetrating any defensive barrier in 2022.

Notably, from 2020 to 2022, the Middle East has been experiencing a period characterized by a notable tendency toward peace. However, there is instability in the Middle East due to tensions between Israel, Iran, and several Arab countries. Moreover, there are interventions from external countries that make the Middle East situation even worse (Suha, 2020). It is essential to note that there is an ongoing weapons race, massive joint military exercises, and war simulations in the Middle East. This study investigates the factors contributing to an arms race and tremendous military activity in the Middle East between 2020 and 2022.

This research holds significance in comprehending the underlying factors contributing to present-day geopolitical disputes in the Middle East. The Middle East is characterized by a volatile geopolitical landscape (Shafae & Golmohammadi, 2022). The potential ramifications of disorder in the Middle East extend beyond regional boundaries, significantly influencing global stability and security. The fluctuation of global oil prices is observed as one of the consequences resulting from conflicts in the Middle East (Khurshid, Rau, Khan, & Calin, 2022). By comprehending the underlying factors that give rise to present-day conflicts in the Middle East, the global community has the potential to facilitate the advancement of a more secure and steady region in the Middle East. The international community has the capacity to offer several choices aimed at fostering mutual confidence among nations in the Middle East. Furthermore, it is imperative for all parties involved to take measures to avert the most dire outcome of heightened tensions in the Middle East region.

## **Methods**

This study used a qualitative descriptive research design to comprehensively analyze the available literature. The researchers collect primary and secondary data from diverse sources, such as official state documents, press announcements, and news articles from media outlets associated with multiple Middle Eastern nations. The researcher also gathers data from online news sources, books, and scientific publications that are both relevant and reputable, and have been widely disseminated on the internet. The present study employs a qualitative research approach, specifically text analysis, to examine the acquired data. The data is subsequently condensed and analyzed using the conceptual framework as a guiding framework. Conclusions are formulated based on the examination of the collected data, which is assessed within the framework of the conceptual model, with the aim of addressing the issue under investigation.

## Results and Discussions

### 1. Security Dilemma

The security dilemma is a theoretical construct within security studies. The state's aspiration to enhance its military capabilities and armaments possesses the potential to engender a security conundrum. The decision of a nation to improve its military capabilities would likely prompt other nations also to pursue an expansion in their military capacities. Improving the number and quality of a nation's defense equipment system will likely incite other countries to undertake comparable measures. This endeavor is undertaken because of a nation's lack of certainty over the underlying intentions behind another nation's efforts to enhance its military capabilities, specifically whether defensive or offensive motivations drive them. The security dilemma has the potential to engender war among states. States must prioritize the safeguarding of their security. In an anarchic order, the absence of a guarantor of peace is evident. Countries will endeavor to optimize their security by prioritizing investments in the military domain (Saadon, 2020).

The security dilemma relates to the "prisoner's dilemma" logic (Jervis, 1978). In this logical framework, it is assumed that every actor will engage in rational decision-making, striving for optimal outcomes in the face of unknown circumstances. The security dilemma will be intensified when offensive tendencies dominate the international structure over the defensive nature (Afrimadona, 2013). In a contentious setting, nations can swiftly initiate hostility towards each other. Countries commonly accumulate military equipment possessing aggressive capabilities, generating possible security vulnerabilities for other nations. Nations with a perception of vulnerability tend to prioritize strengthening their military capabilities, which may involve acquiring and advancing offensive armaments. The proliferation of distrust between nations concerning their abusive inclinations is propelled by a common perception that other nations can initiate hostile actions against their respective territories. Countries face a state of ambiguity over the nature of arms acquired from foreign countries, as it remains uncertain whether these weapons are solely meant for defensive purposes or possess offensive capabilities. Moreover, the significant likelihood of military conflict necessitates governments to form alliances (Glaser, 1997). Hence, in response to the augmented military capabilities of other countries, a government may seek to enhance its military capacity and weapon to counterbalance the military threat. The second potential scenario is a preemptive military action undertaken by a nation to deter other countries from exploiting their military advantage to launch offensive operations against other nations (Wivel, 2011).

According to John Hertz's assertion in 2003, the security dilemma remains pertinent in the aftermath of the Cold War (Hertz, 2003). According to Hertz, the underlying factor contributing to the security issue has shifted away from the equilibrium between the United States and the Soviet Union. Conversely, after the conclusion of the Cold War, several nations acquired atomic capabilities. Certain countries also saw themselves as primary targets in the worldwide fight against terrorism. Countries are observed to augment their defense expenditures in a context characterized by an emerging multipolar order. Countries have the potential to establish cooperation or alliances with other nations as a means to address the security issues they encounter. In such circumstances, a sense of distrust exists, a proliferation of armaments, and the potential for armed conflict. Hertz asserts that a correlation exists between a global structure characterized by an absence of a centralized authority and the occurrence of arms races and disputes. Given several new concerns, countries increasingly aim to enhance their self-protection measures. Arms sales continue to remain at a high level. Hertz emphasized that the relevance of survival, security, and combat conditions persisted until the post-Cold War era.

## 2. Military Trend in the Middle East

There has been an observable escalation in the military capabilities of three influential entities in the Middle Eastern region. Firstly, we have the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain. Israel is considered the second power, whereas Iran is seen as the third power. According to data from SIPRI and several international media sources, Saudi Arabia procured 91 warplanes from the United States and 15 fighters from the United Kingdom between 2016 and 2021. Additionally, the country has acquired an anti-ballistic missile air defense system. Moreover, it has been stated that Saudi Arabia is currently engaged in developing a ballistic missile system with the assistance of China.

It has been reported that the United Arab Emirates had purportedly formulated plans to acquire 50 F-35 fighter aircraft and MQ-9 uncrewed aerial vehicles within 2020. However, the implementation of these plans was subsequently postponed by President Biden. Nevertheless, the United Arab Emirates still procures defense equipment from South Korea, Israel, and China. Procuring defense equipment encompasses acquiring anti-missile assault systems, missiles, and combat trainer aircraft. The United Arab Emirates bought 80 Rafale fighter aircraft and 12 military helicopters from France to enhance their offensive capabilities. During the commencement of the armaments show in Abu Dhabi in 2021, the United Arab Emirates entered into a contractual agreement to acquire defense equipment valued at USD 1.36 billion. This purchase encompasses a range of items, including drones from South Africa and artillery from Serbia.

During 2021, a notable phenomenon emerged in which Arab nations exhibited a propensity towards procuring fighter aircraft. The United States is actively engaged in fostering a strategic partnership to facilitate the development of a robust fighting force for the Gulf countries. In 2022, the United States granted a contract to Lockheed Martin to manufacture fighter aircraft distributed among multiple nations, Bahrain being one of them. Bahrain is scheduled to acquire 12 AH-1Z Viper helicopter gunships from the United States, with the delivery expected to be completed by 2022. The order for these aircraft was placed in 2019. Furthermore, Bahrain is actively pursuing the enhancement of its F-16 aircraft through the integration of cutting-edge technological advancements. Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have shown interest in procuring Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system.

Israel is now engaged in the development of both defensive and offensive capabilities. Israel is working to enhance its military capabilities and expand its arms procurement endeavors. Israel is currently involved in developing defensive weaponry, exemplified by the ongoing efforts to advance the powers of the Arrow 3 system. The Israeli government plans to conduct testing of this system in the Alaskan region of the United States during the early months of 2022. Israel's system development aimed to proactively predict potential Iranian ballistic missile assaults in the forthcoming period. The defense above system can effectively engage adversaries at elevated altitudes within the Earth's atmosphere. According to the Israeli Defense Ministry, as stated on the official Israeli website, the Israeli army's development of the Arrow system was undertaken to address potential threats inside the region proactively. According to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, the weapons test aimed to safeguard Israel against potential regional threats.

The Arrow 4 missile system was developed by Israel in 2022. According to the Israeli Defense Minister, implementing the Arrow 4 missile system will enhance Israel's military capabilities by preemptively countering any ballistic missile threats directed toward the nation. The Israeli Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett, has made a statement regarding successfully testing the Iron Beam laser weapon. This advanced technology has demonstrated its capability to effectively disrupt drones, missiles, and planes within the

airspace of Israel. The Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Naftali Bennett, has asserted that the laser mentioned above weapon possesses transformative capabilities within the geopolitical context of the Middle East. The Israeli Defense Minister underscored the commitment of Israel to developing offensive and defensive capabilities to proactively address any threats from the Middle East region and beyond.

Israel is currently augmenting its offensive weaponry. Israel has successfully acquired F-35 fighter aircraft with stealth capabilities under a procurement arrangement with the United States. During the latter part of 2021, Israel negotiated with the United States about procuring the KC-46 air tanker, transport helicopter, and missile launcher. The proclivity to enhance the armament of Israel is bolstered by frequent visits made by Israeli military officials to the United States. During the initial months of 2022, the United States reached an agreement to authorize the sale of two KC-46 units to the nation of Israel. Potentially, Israel will use those air tankers to facilitate aerial strike operations targeting Iran.

Israel is enhancing its military collaboration with the United States. The meeting between the foreign minister of Israel and the secretary of state of the United States occurred on May 19, 2022, at the Pentagon. The United States has agreed to provide Israel with a military aid package of 4.8 billion dollars. The purpose of the help is to safeguard Israel's security against potential threats from Iran. The US also deployed KC-46 aircraft to refuel Israeli warplanes, training in the Chariot of Fire war simulation. In the exercise, Israel simulates an attack on Iran. During the preceding phase of military maneuvers in 2021, Israel conducted collaborative military training in the Red Sea in November 2021, encompassing the participation of the naval forces of the United States, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain.

In February 2022, the Islamic Republic of Iran officially announced the successful development of the Khaybar Shekan missile. As mentioned, the missile possesses excellent precision, is low in weight, can penetrate anti-missile weapons systems, and has a maximum range of 1450 kilometers. Previously, Iran was known to have ballistic missiles that could reach 2,000 km, like the Sejil missiles. Iran has also conducted several ballistic missile test launches, such as those in December 2021. In the exercise entitled, Iran launched long-range, medium-range, and short-range ballistic missiles such as Emad, Ghadr, Sejil, Zelzal, Dezful, and Zolfaghar. Iran possesses long-range ballistic missiles capable of reaching many strategic locations, including Israel, United States military sites situated in the Middle East, and the countries located in the Gulf region.

Furthermore, Iran has augmented its anti-aircraft defenses. The anti-aircraft system is enhanced to mitigate the limitations of the air force's fleet, which predominantly consists of aging aircraft (Wirengjurit, 2022). Iran is now engaged in the ongoing development of anti-air warfare systems. Iran has adapted to the S200 technology, Russia's S300 system, and North Korea's ballistic missile technology. In 2019, Iran successfully manufactured the Bavar 373 anti-aircraft weapon system, which possesses capabilities comparable to the S300 system and exhibits performance near Russia's S400 system. In 2021, Iran additionally expressed its commitment to the ongoing modernization of its fighter jet fleet. 2019 Iran successfully engineered scaled-down iterations of the Kawshar and Saqeh fighter aircraft models. In the year 2017, Iran made a declaration regarding the purported successful testing of a fighter aircraft known as the Qaher 313, which incorporates stealth technology. Iran is also developing drones with various variants, such as the Ababil-3, Mohajer-6, and Shahed 149, which can reach hundreds of kilometers. In April 2022, Iran exhibited the latest defense equipment owned by the country, including the Kaman 22 drone, which can fly for 24 hours within three hundred kilometers and has combat capabilities. In addition, Iran also exhibited electronic

warfare equipment. In the middle of 2022, Iran showcased a collection of drones housed in an underground facility. Iran asserted that the subterranean storage of drones was undertaken to safeguard its independence and territorial integrity. Interestingly, 2021 Iran held a simulated war against Israel's nuclear sites. The simulation combined ballistic missile attacks and drone training to fight against enemy targets. Iran also maintains its network alliances with armed groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and the Hashd al-Shaabi, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad in Palestine.

### **3. Statements from Leaders of Middle Eastern Countries**

Ongoing conflicts among countries plague the Middle East. These rising tensions have sparked concerns about how they might impact the policy decisions of nations throughout the region. There is an undeniable link between the region's arms race and the atmosphere of suspicion due mainly to the ongoing violence. Several factors contribute to the severity of these conflicts, including geopolitical issues like border disputes, extremist ideologies, and terrorism. Sectarian tensions also become of the resources in the Middle East (Wibowo & Zamzamy, 2021). One of the most pressing dilemmas in recent years has been the Iranian nuclear program and the potential for conflict with Israel, which the United States and other Arab nations support (Wirengjurit, 2022). The remarks made by leaders in multiple Middle Eastern nations suggest the presence of a security dilemma within each respective country. Israel remains concerned about Iran's nuclear energy ambitions, despite Iran's claims that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. Israel does not trust Iran's official statements and has consistently warned about the dangers associated with Iran's nuclear program. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett expressed concern about Iran's nuclear advancements. Naftali said that Iran had crossed a critical threshold in pursuing atomic armament. The Israeli prime minister emphasized that the augmentation of Iran's nuclear capabilities could lead to the acquisition of atomic weaponry. Additionally, there are concerns that Iran possesses advanced ballistic missile technology capable of transporting nuclear warheads.

Furthermore, there has been a notable escalation in diplomatic relations between Israel and many Gulf nations. This visit holds significant historical importance. In January 2022, a diplomatic visit occurred between the President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). During the diplomatic encounter, the President of Israel expressed the readiness of the Israeli government to assist in bolstering the security measures of the United Arab Emirates. Contrarily, the representative from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) argued that establishing ties between the UAE and Israel holds significant importance in tackling regional security dilemmas, namely about the presence and influence of terrorist organizations and militias. According to the Israeli Prime Minister, during the visit of the Israeli President to the United Arab Emirates in December 2021, the commitment to cooperation between Israel and the UAE was reinforced. During the diplomatic encounter between the Prime Minister of Israel and the envoy of the United Arab Emirates, Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, the latter expressed the following statement. In the year 2020, the United Arab Emirates exhibited a stance of non-acceptance towards the comments made by Iranian President Rouhani and other Iranian officials, which were critical, regarding the process of normalizing relations between the UAE and Israel. Israel also maintains strong diplomatic ties with various Arab nations (Kosman, 2022). Israeli Prime Minister Natalie Bennett made a diplomatic visit to Bahrain in February 2022. During the diplomatic encounter, the Bahraini delegate stressed that engagement with Israel was vital to uphold stability and security within the area. The two parties discussed Iran's nuclear program, terrorism, radicalism, and social matters.

The official statement issued by the Bahrain Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the military collaboration between Bahrain and the United States also sheds light on Bahrain's concerns about Iran. Bahrain's statement also acknowledged the significance of enhancing relations with Israel. According to the official statement issued by the Bahraini government, it has been expressed that Bahrain intends to further strengthen its collaborative efforts with the United States and Israel, particularly in light of the perceived challenges posed by Iran.

In March 2022, foreign ministers from Arab nations, including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Bahrain, participated in the Negev Summit held in Israel. The Israeli government hosted the event. The conference deliberated upon matters about regional security. One of the focal aspects discussed during the discussion pertained to the shared vulnerability experienced by Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Bahrain about the threat posed by Iran. During the Negev conference, the Israeli Foreign Minister issued a joint statement highlighting the establishment of a collaborative framework between Israel and multiple Arab governments. This framework aims to deter and counter a familiar opponent, particularly Iran and its affiliated groups. It is widely believed that they can induce fear and panic inside the vicinity.

Saudi Arabia also reacted negatively to Iran. To the Saudis, Iran is not only a competing country but an enemy state (Esmaili & Salimi, 2021). Saudi Arabia and Iran are the area's two most important and decisive nations. Saudi Arabia and Iran have distinctive strategic and geopolitical characteristics that distinguish them from other countries in the region (Nourmohammadi & Seifi, 2020). For example, at the 2020 cabinet meeting, Saudi Arabia emphasized the importance of expanding sanctions against Iran. Lifting sanctions on Iran will only destabilize the region and deepen regional conflicts. Saudi Arabia supports the international community in pressuring Iran. Saudi Arabia also accuses Iran of supporting the Houthi terrorist group, which carries out consistent attacks on Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia believes Iran has long used its economic resources to support terrorist groups, destabilize the region, develop ballistic missiles, and threaten maritime navigation and international sea lanes. In addition, in the same statement, Saudi Arabia believes Iran threatens regional stability with its nuclear program. In 2020, for example, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al Jubeir stated that if Iran wants to develop nuclear, then Saudi Arabia also has the option to build nuclear weapons. This policy will protect the territory and its citizens. Saudi Arabia also imports weapons from the US in large quantities. For decades, Saudi Arabia's military has relied heavily on the United States, particularly in military weapons and training to counter Iran's influence (Shabbir, Khan, & Bhattarai, 2023).

The conflict in Yemen has significant implications for the arms race in the Middle East. The ongoing conflict in Yemen continues to serve as a battleground for the proxy rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Iran supports the Houthi faction in their battle against the government forces backed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The Houthis have consistently threatened Saudi Arabia with their recurrent missile attack pronouncements. Frequent occurrences of these assaults have been observed in urban areas of Saudi Arabia. The utilization of uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs) to carry out targeted attacks against the oil facilities owned by Aramco. The Saudi Arabian government and the international security community express skepticism about the Houthis' capacity to develop highly sophisticated military weaponry. In 2022, the Houthis conducted an offensive against the United Arab Emirates using missile and drone weaponry.

In contrast, there is a suspicion that Iran has provided the Houthis with defensive weaponry, leading to a notable augmentation in the military capabilities of the Houthis.



In response, the Saudi Arabian forces engaged in military operations in Yemen, targeting various sites such as hospitals, international airports, and other entities, employing United States-supplied combat weapons, notably F-15 aircraft. According to a report from the Saudi Press Agency, Saudi Arabia has received backing from Bahrain in its efforts to counteract the regional destabilization caused by Iran. Bahrain has criticized Iran's provision of support to the Houthi organization, which has been engaged in attacks against Saudi Arabia. According to the official statement released by Bahrain's foreign ministry, it has been asserted that Iran provided help to the Houthi group in executing their drone-based assaults.

During the April 2022 military display, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi declared that in the event of any perceived aggression from Israel, Iran would initiate an offensive targeting the core of Israel. Iran issued a warning to Israel, expressing that the perceived antagonistic actions of the Israeli government against Iran would elicit a retaliatory response from the Iranian military. The Iranian delegate highlighted the historical pattern of Israel's assertive foreign policy inclinations inside the Middle Eastern region. Israel frequently engages in actions that contravene international law by acting aggressively against neighboring countries in the area. Iran characterizes Israel's nuclear program, often known as the Zionist state's arsenal, as a potential source of regional instability. However, it should be noted that raising concerns about Iran's nuclear program, which is intended for benign purposes, may divert attention away from the genuine security concern in the Middle East, which is the actions related to Israel's possession of atomic bombs. General Hatami of Iran also stated that Iran could level Tel Aviv and Haifa if Israel made a mistake.

Iran believes that Israel's closeness to Gulf states warrants vigilance. For example, the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Saeed Khatibzadeh, said that the United Arab Emirates' acceptance of the Israeli Prime Minister's visit was a bad thing in the memory of the people of the Middle East region. Khatibzadeh reminded Arab countries to oppose any action that could stabilize Israel's presence in the Middle East. Iran says countries that normalize relations with Israel will soon realize their mistake. Iran's Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, stressed that he would not tolerate Israel's presence near its borders. Iran also stated that Iran would respond to any threats against the country, as emphasized by Ali Shamkhani, chairman of Iran's National Security Council, who said that Iran has various alternatives to respond in a balanced way to threats from Israel and the US. Iran would react against any Israeli attack on Iran, according to Major General Mohammad Bagheri, and Israel would not survive since it is surrounded by resistance organizations. Iran claims to have transferred its experience to resistance groups. Foreign Minister of Iran, Mohammad Javad Zarif, also said it would continue supporting resistance groups in the Middle East. Iran's defense minister also conveyed Iran's preparedness statement, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Qaraei Ashtani, warning that the enemy's unwise actions will get resistance from Iran.

Ashtiani stated that Iran had prepared its defensive forces based on domestic technology to respond to threats and aggression. The progress of Iran's weapons is only for protecting Iran from possible attacks and aggression from other countries. In this context, Iran claims that the development of ballistic missiles is solely a means of state defense and is separate from the nuclear program so that it does not violate the UN Security Council resolution. Iran also claims that drone development is in defense and peacekeeping interests. In the nuclear context, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has consistently stated that nuclear development is not a weapon but for peaceful purposes and scientific interests.

Meanwhile, Qatar is trying to position itself halfway between Iran and Israel. Qatar claims its country facilitates peace discussions between warring parties in the region. Qatar does not want tension between the United States and Iran and views the two countries as strategic partners for Qatar. Qatar claims that its country wants regional stability. However, on the other hand, Qatar stated that Israel's weapons arsenal capabilities had worried neighboring countries in the region.

#### **4. Security Dilemma Problem**

The security dilemma concept can elucidate the arms race phenomenon—every nation endeavors to optimize its power in interactions among countries characterized by anarchy and self-reliance. Nations are endeavoring to enhance their military capacities to address potential challenges arising from anarchic systems proactively. Enhancing a nation's military capacity within an anarchic international system may result in misinterpretations by other nations as a potential risk. The exacerbation of the security issue may occur when a prevalence of violent dispositions characterizes the regional organization. As a result, countries may opt to bolster their military capabilities and weaponry systems or establish alliances with nations with mutual adversaries.

The Middle East region is experiencing heightened tensions in inter-country relations, which correspond to the escalating arms capabilities of each nation involved. The concerns among countries in the Middle East are evident through the issuance of public declarations by the respective officials of these nations. The subject matter pertains to the ongoing confrontation between Iran and Israel, including the involvement of the United States. A prevailing view exists that Iran maintains an assertive posture within the Middle East region. Based on the perspectives of international media outlets, government officials, and internal sources, there is a consensus that Iran's policy in the Middle East is predominantly characterized as military rather than diplomatic (Esmaeili & Salimi, 2021). Israel is bolstering its military and nuclear capabilities, establishing a buffer zone for international and regional alliances. Israel has a unique military strategy centered on nuclear deterrence, missile defense, superior military quality in the area, strategic balance, and an aggressive approach to security (Gorji, Eslami, & Jamshidi, 2019).

In contrast, Iran perceives Israel as a significant danger to the stability and security of the Middle East region. The establishment of peaceful relations between various Gulf countries and Israel has posed a threat to Iran's security. It is noteworthy that Israel conducted military exercises to simulate an attack on a nuclear facility located in Iran. In contrast, it is anticipated that in 2021, Iran will engage in military training to simulate a conflict scenario with Israel, explicitly targeting Israel's nuclear facilities with the objective of their destruction.

The security dilemma is evident in the statements made by state officials from Iran, Israel, and many Gulf countries. Israeli officials' expression of official statements indicates the prevailing lack of confidence between Israel and the Gulf states about Iran. A discernible pattern has emerged wherein the Gulf states, which perceive a sense of vulnerability due to Iran's actions, have been cultivating increasingly intimate ties with Israel. The forthcoming 2021 Negev summit is expected to witness the issuance of a collective official declaration by Israel, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, addressing shared apprehensions about the Iranian threat. Those countries share a common perception that Iran can disrupt the stability of the region's security. Therefore, those countries will enhance their military capabilities and foster strategic collaboration to address the perceived threat posed by Iran effectively. The proliferation of Iranian military technologies, including ballistic weapons and military drones, has emerged as a significant source of concern and potential threats.

The Gulf countries and Israel hold the suspicion that Iran's nuclear research program is driven by a covert intention to acquire atomic weaponry. Israel, among Arab nations such as Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, actively seeks to enhance their military capacities under an atmosphere of deep-seated mistrust prevalent in the Middle East. Israel is currently engaged in the development of a military capability that is intended for offensive purposes, namely, targeting Iran. Israel has procured defense equipment from the United States to establish a defensive capacity to safeguard its national security against Iran, which possesses a strategic advantage regarding uncrewed aerial vehicles and ballistic weaponry. Gulf nations additionally engage in the importation of advanced armaments, encompassing both defensive and offensive capabilities. Israel and Gulf nations, including Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, share the same understanding regarding enhancing their military capabilities. This strategic objective is primarily driven by the need to proactively address potential regional security dilemmas, particularly those emanating from the perceived threat posed by Iran. Notably, Israel has built strategic proximity with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, both of which sense a threat from Iran. However, a formal military alliance has not yet been formed. The tight cooperation between Israel, the United States, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates is demonstrated through their participation in joint military exercises and war simulations.

Iranian state officials perceive Israel as a significant danger to the stability and security of the Middle East region. The subject at hand warrants the attention of the existing countries due to Israel's historical record of assertiveness in the area and its possession of nuclear capabilities. Iran asserts that the expansion of its weaponry is primarily motivated by the need to safeguard its national security against potential hostile incursions. Furthermore, Iran claims that its nuclear program is an integral part of its national interests and emphasizes its preparedness to confront any acts of aggression while reserving the right to retaliate against hostile actions that harm Iran. Due to this rationale, Iran asserts its pursuit of advancements in weapons technology. Iran is now engaged in the augmentation of its military capabilities, encompassing both defensive and offensive aspects. Iran, in addition to its weapon development efforts, establishes strategic alliances with militia organizations in the Middle East as a form of resistance against the Zionist regime, as shown by statements made by Iranian state leaders. The potential destabilization of the Middle East is a consequence of the normalization and geographical proximity between Israel and many Gulf nations. Iran also asserts that Europe's policy of exporting aircraft to the Middle East is contributing to the destabilization of the area. Iran expressed its disapproval of France's choice to engage in the sale of the Rafale aircraft to the United Arab Emirates. According to Saeed Khatibzadeh, the spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, France has contributed to the destabilization of the Middle East region. Khatibzadeh further asserts that the proliferation of weaponry in the Middle East has catalyzed the prevailing state of disorder. Khatibzadeh additionally announced that significant amounts of US currency had been transferred to Arab nations, concurrently with Iran under considerable scrutiny on its ballistic missile program.

## **Conclusion**

When the prevailing condition of animosity characterizes the framework of the interstate milieu, the security dilemma is intensified to a significant extent. The pervasive nature of the confrontational system in the Middle East is readily apparent in the ongoing psychological warfare between various regimes. Furthermore, several sporadic assaults served to exacerbate the antagonistic atmosphere in the realm of global diplomacy. Moreover, the apprehension regarding Iran extends beyond the prospect of confrontation with Israel since many Gulf states harbor concerns. In a hostile climate, nations will seek

to enhance their military capabilities. The security dilemma is evident in the form of an escalation in weaponry procurement and the conduct of war simulations. In the present scenario, the augmentation of a nation's military capabilities within the Middle East region could potentially be perceived as a source of concern for neighboring countries.

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